

Message Text

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ACTION SCI-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 IO-14 ISO-00 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 INR-11

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 RSC-01 FEAE-00 EPA-04 CEQ-02

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NIC-01 DRC-01 /148 W

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R 011741Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4162

INFO AEC GERMANTOWN

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 12204

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TECH, GW

SUBJ: SAFEGUARDING RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL AND PLUTONIUM:
PRESS REPORTS LAXITY IN FRG

1. SUMMARY: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FRG REGULATION, PROCEDURES, AND PHYSICAL MEASURES FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS AND PLUTONIUM HAVE BEEN DRAMATICALLY PUT INTO QUESTION BY TWO RECENT EVENTS WHICH WERE FIRST BROUGHT TO PUBLIC ATTENTION IN THE JULY 8TH ISSUE OF "DER SPIEGEL". END SUMMARY.

2. ONE OF THE INCIDENTS REPORTED BY "SPIEGEL" ENTAILED THE "DISCOVERY" OF A PLASTIC BAG CONTAINING RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL AT A CITY DUMP NEAR THE OBRIGHEIM-AM-NECKAR NUCLEAR POWER STATION BY "SPIEGEL" REPORTERS EQUIPPED WITH GEIGER COUNTERS. THE PLASTIC BAG (WHICH REPORTEDLY HAD A RADIOACTIVE LEVEL OF 3 MULTI-CURRIE AND 200 MULTI-REM PER HOUR) CONTAINED LEAD-ENCLOSED PELLETS OF SPENT RESINS OF THE TYPE USED IN THE RADIOACTIVE EFFLUENT CONTROL SYSTEMS OF REACTORS.

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3. THE SECOND INCIDENT CONCERNED "GATE-CRASHING" BY UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS AT ALKEM GMBH (A FIRM ENGAGED IN THE PRODUCTION OF FAST-BREEDER FUELS) AT WOLFGANG (NEAR HANAU) IN THE STATE OF HESSE. IN LATE JUNE, "SPIEGEL" REPORTERS MANAGED TO DRIVE THEIR AUTO UNCHECKED INTO THE COMPANY'S PREMISES AND BROWSE AROUND THE PLANT AREA. SEVERAL HUNDRED KILOGRAMS OF PLUTONIUM IS STORED ON THESE PREMISES.

4. IN FOLLOW-UP TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE PLASTIC BAG THE BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG STATE GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHED AN AD HOC COMMITTEE (INCLUDING OFFICES OF THE STATE CRIMINAL POLICE OFFICE AND THE OFFICE OF RADIATION PROTECTION OF THE STATE MINISTRY FOR LABOR AND WELFARE) TO INVESTIGATE THE INCIDENT. THROUGH THE AD HOC COMMITTEE'S INQUIRY, IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT ON OCTOBER 10, 1973, A TOTAL OF FIVE PLASTIC BAGS CONTAINING MATERIAL OF MEDIUM RADIOACTIVITY DISAPPEARED FROM THE OBRIGHEIM NUCLEAR POWER STATION. (ORDINARILY, THESE BAGS WOULD HAVE BEEN FORWARDED IN CONCRETE-LINED CONTAINERS TO THE STORAGE FACILITIES PROVIDED AT ABANDONED SALT MINES IN LOWER SAXONY.) IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THE BAG FOUND BY THE "SPIEGEL" REPORTERS WAS ONE OF THESE MISSING FIVE, WITH THE OTHER FOUR STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR. ALSO, INASMUCH AS THE LAST ROUTINE MONITORING OF THE CITY DUMP, WHICH WAS CARRIED OUT BY OBRIGHEIM POWER STATION OFFICERS ON JULY 3, 1974, HAD PROVED NEGATIVE, THE MATERIAL MUST HAVE BEEN DUMPED AFTER THAT DATE. FINALLY, IT WAS DISCOVERED THAT THERE WERE CERTAIN DOORS IN THE REACTOR BUILDING THAT WOULD MAKE POSSIBLE REMOVAL OF THE MATERIAL WITHOUT TRIPPING THE HIGHLY SENSITIVE ALARM SYSTEM.

5. THE NEWSPAPER REPORTS SUBSEQUENT TO THE DISCOVERY OF THE PLASTIC BAG - (IN "DIE WELT" "HANDELSBLATT", "BONN GENERAL", "ANZEIGER") RAISED DOUBTS AS TO THE ACCIDENTAL NATURE OF THE "SPIEGEL" FIND. THE "HANDELSBLATT" COMMENTED: "SINCE 'SPIEGEL' REPORTERS ARE NORMALLY ENGAGED IN PURSUITS OTHER THAN

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CHECKING DUMPS THEY ALSO OUGHT TO EXPLAIN HOW THEY IMMEDIATELY STRUCK RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL IN THIS ONE, AND DURING THE GUARD'S LUNCH BREAK AT THAT. WHO TIPPED THEM OFF RATHER THAN INFORMING THE POLICE, OR THE TRADE INSPECTION OFFICE, OR THE OBRIGHEIM MANAGEMENT?" "DIE WELT" CITED THE OBRIGHEIM MAYOR, WHO SURMISED THAT THE "SPIEGEL" REPORTERS MIGHT HAVE BEEN TRICKED BY OVER-ANXIOUS ENVIRONMENTALISTS, AND A STATEMENT OF

A STUTTGART "SPIEGEL" EDITOR, WHO ADMITTED "SOME
PEOPLE KNEW WE WOULD CHECK THE OBRIGHEIM DUMP."

6. THE DIRECTORS OF THE OBRIGHEIM POWER STATION ADMITTED
THAT THERE MAY BE SOME LOOPHOLES IN THE PLANT'S
SAFEGUARDS SYSTEM. THE AD HOC COMMITTEE HAS DECIDED

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TO ATTEMPT TO PLUG THESE BY REQUIRING THE INSTALLATION
OF ADDITIONAL SAFETY DEVICES IN THE PLANT, INCLUDING
DEVICES AT THE EMERGENCY EXITS. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO
LEGAL AUTHORITIES IN BADEN-WUERTEMBERG, THERE IS LITTLE
HOPE THAT THE PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INCIDENT WILL
BE DISCOVERED, OR THAT THE MEANS BY WHICH THE PLASTIC
BAG REACHED THE CITY DUMP WILL BE EXPOSED. THE PLANT'S
STAFF AND VISITORS
NUMBERS IN THE HUNDREDS. IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO
INTERROGATE THESE PEOPLE, ALL OF WHOM MIGHT HAVE BEEN
IN A POSITION TO SMUGGLE THE BAGS FROM THE PLANT.

7. BOTH THESE INCIDENTS GENERATED INTEREST ON THE
FEDERAL POLITICAL LEVEL. THE DIRECTORS OF THE
OBRIGHEIM POWER STATION WERE ASKED TO TESTIFY BEFORE
THE INTERIOR COMMITTEE OF THE BUNDESTAG. THE COMMITTEE
CHAIRMAN (SPD) ANNOUNCED THAT THE COMMITTEE HAD
REQUESTED A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ABOUT WASTE HANDLING
PRACTICES AND WILL EITHER AMEND RADIATION PROTECTION
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REGULATIONS TO MAKE THEM MORE FOOLPROOF OR IF THE
REGULATIONS PROVE TO BE ADEQUATE TO ADD DOUBLE CHECKS
AS A HEDGE AGAINST NEGLIGENCE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE REGULATIONS. THE INCIDENT AT ALKEM DREW SPECIAL
CRITICISM FROM THE CDU/CSU OPPOSITION WHICH CALLED FOR
MORE STRINGENT CONTROL OF PLUTONIUM BY THE
SUBSTITUTION OF PRIVATELY ORGANIZED PROTECTION BY
GOVERNMENT-ADMINISTERED SAFEGUARDS, ALTHOUGH THEY DO
NOT EXCLUDE THAT THE REPORTED INSTANCES OF INADEQUATE
STORAGE OF RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL MAY HAVE BEEN "PLANTED
OCCURRENCES INITIATED BY FANATIC OPPONENTS TO NUCLEAR
ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS."
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